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NOTES FOR HUNTING-MEN



NOTES FOR HUNTING-
MEN. By Captain Cortlandt
Gordon Mackenzie, Royal Artillery



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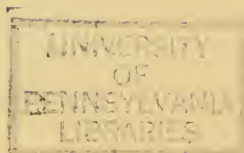
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P R E F A C E

It is with strangely mingled feelings of sorrow and pride, that, by request, I present this book : sorrow, of such a kind that only those can know who, out of this world's time, have lost a rare and great friendship—the Author is no longer with us to publish these pages himself ; pride, in this, the work of my best friend, which cannot help but give a glimpse of his charming mind and characteristic ‘thoroughness.’ Captain Cortlandt Gordon Mackenzie, best known to his friends, in the regiment and the fields of sport, as ‘Corty,’ succumbed to enteric fever at De Aar, in Cape Colony, on January 24, 1900.

He was sent out to South Africa in July 1899, when war with the Transvaal Government looked imminent, to buy horses for the British Army. A wise selection, for his heart was in his work, and

his energy untiring ; and, besides having passed the Veterinary School at Aldershot with marked distinction, he possessed the 'natural' gift of knowledge and judgment of the animal that was to play so important a part in the war. The hardest and most trying work began when he had to form a remount dépôt at De Aar—a horribly dusty and brown spot on the Cape Town—Pretoria main line. From there he not only had to make journeys to buy horses, but to arrange for their reception and that of hundreds of lately landed mules, and also to apportion animals to different units as they were wanted.

This was no sinecure, as one can imagine when one comes to think of the organisation it would require. Be it said, to his credit, he was one of those men who would do well, and spare no pains over whatever he took up ; and his work in this instance was such, that all who came in contact with the results have said 'Well done.' Still more, here was an example which, to follow, would merit approbation from our Sovereign and our country.

Shortly before the British Army advanced to attack the Boer position at Magersfontein, he

managed to get up to the front, and was attached, during the action, to the staff of the officer commanding the Royal Artillery ; many present at the fight have spoken of his signal use, and the gallantry he displayed that day.

It seems strange that 'Fate' should have directed that his life should be spared then, only a short time afterwards to fall a victim to that other enemy, enteric fever.

The Author states, in his Introduction, how it happened that he began to write these pages for publication ; he wrote the latter chapters on board the ship which took him to South Africa, and, doubtless, would have brought the book out himself, had he returned home.

I do not know by what title the Author intended to call his book ; but it seems fitting to call it by the name seen on the title-page.

With less modesty than the writer, I think I am not wrong in saying that, even if you, Reader, are not of the younger generation of hunting-men, many ideas of worth and help will present themselves to you. His friends and acquaintances will, I believe,

read these pages with feelings of something more than interest, and bring back to memory one of whom they could, in bygone times, so truly think and say:—

On the earth there breathes not
A man more worthy of a woman's love—
A soldier's trust—a subject's reverence—
A king's esteem—the whole world's admiration.

Mrs. Gordon Mackenzie wishes me to say that the proceeds arising from the sale of this book will be given to the Hunt Servants' Benefit Society.

H. N. SCHOFIELD.

ALDERSHOT, 1901.

INTRODUCTION

I THINK an excuse is needed from anyone venturing to add to the large number of books already published on Stable Management, and kindred subjects, especially when such an one feels that he has nothing particularly new or original to set forth. I believe, however, that I am right in saying that no book exists, written by a hunting-man purely for hunting-men. I know that I have often sought for one in vain.

The following pages embody the experiences of more than fifteen years in a hunting-stable—years during which my horses have been amongst the dearest, and not the least interesting, of my friends.

Compelled at first to be my own stud groom, I found it of use to keep a rough note-book in which to jot down my various stable experiences (some of them bitter enough), noting recipes which I had

tried, with the result in each case. It is this notebook, which, in a somewhat revised form, I venture to present to the younger generation of hunting-men. The many more experienced than myself, and those fortunate employers of irreproachable stud grooms, will have nothing to learn from it, but may perhaps glean an hour's amusement reading the experiences and views of a less fortunate brother sportsman. There must, however, I think, be many who are starting a stable, as I had to do, with but little knowledge, and with no one at hand willing or competent to give advice. The standard books on the subject—'Stonehenge,' 'Fitz-Wygram,' 'Hayes,' and others—are excellent, and should be in every sportsman's library; but they are not, and do not profess to be, written from a purely hunting stand-point.

Though in a work, based entirely on personal experience, it is almost impossible to avoid the constant use of the first person singular, I beg, once for all, to disclaim any intention of being dogmatic, or of speaking with authority. The more one gets interested in any subject, the more painfully one realises one's own ignorance of it.

There is daily something to learn, if not to unlearn ; but I can at least claim to have made an honest attempt to put down the results of my own, somewhat dearly bought, experience, in the hope of assisting some of the younger generation of hunting-men to negotiate fences over which I had, in my young days, to scramble as best I could. If I realise this hope, in even a few instances, I shall not have written entirely in vain.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	ix
I. THE COUNTRY IN WHICH TO HUNT	1
II. THE HORSE ON WHICH TO HUNT	9
III. THE STABLE	28
IV. GENERAL STABLE MANAGEMENT IN A HUNTING STABLE	37
V. FEEDING OF HUNTERS	55
VI. SUMMERING AND CONDITIONING OF HUNTERS	71
VII. STABLE SERVANTS	89

NOTES FOR HUNTING-MEN

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY IN WHICH TO HUNT

I AM taking this subject first, as it affects, in some measure, the class of horse to buy. My own experience has been chiefly confined to the Country grass countries of England; but I consider that a young man's hunting education is incomplete without a course of woodland hunting, whilst, to become a master in the art of riding to hounds, he should have graduated in the Sister Isle.

I am, however, now assuming that you are a free and independent sportsman, seeking for a country in which to pursue the fox with most pleasure and profit.

As dear old Whyte-Melville says, somewhere: 'All countries are good in their way—some have collars, all have sport.'

If a man's house is in a provincial country, he will do well, I should say, to hunt from there, having, if his purse will allow it, an occasional dart from Melton or some Midland centre. With him associations and friends will weigh in the scale against grass and more brilliant (I do not say better) sport. And there are other advantages in a less fashionable country. In the first place it is cheaper. 'Brooksby,' in one of his charming letters, says not; but I cannot understand how he can really maintain this to be the case. In the first place you want better, that is to say, faster and stronger, horses, and unquestionably more of them. Doubtless in all countries you find a few men well enough mounted to go to the front anywhere; and, no doubt also, the better cattle a man has the better he will be carried, throughout the season, in any country; but still I maintain the truth of Warburton's saying, that 'What's a good country hunter may here prove a brute,' and that a horse on which you might see hounds all day in a cramped plough country, would be an almost useless conveyance when they really run over Leicestershire.

However, I do not think it is necessary to lay any stress on this point, which is pretty generally accepted, although the second (the question of numbers) is perhaps not so universally appreciated.

In these grass countries, even if you class yourself among the light-weight division, if you aspire to ride to hounds and not after them all day, you must have two horses. The exertion of jumping big fences at an almost steeplechase pace takes more out of a hunter than even the heaviest of plough, and, consequently, he takes longer to come round after a gruelling day, which, you must remember, falls to his lot more frequently here than elsewhere. Hear the words of one of the greatest hunting prophets, 'Nimrod,' to wit, about sixty years ago: 'In Leicestershire the universal practice is for each sportsman to have at least two hunters in the field on the same day, a practice found to be economical, as it is from exhaustion, the effect of long-continued severe work, that the health of horses is most injured; and when it is also borne in mind that one horse in six in every man's stud is, on an average, lame or otherwise unfit for work, and that a horse should always have five days' rest after a moderate, and at least seven or eight after a severe, run with hounds, it will not be thought surprising that ten or twelve hunters should be deemed indispensable for a Leicestershire sportsman.' And these words are true in the main now, though many a good man has hunted, and doubtless will, over Leicestershire, with a smaller stud.

Apart from the smaller expenditure involved, another great advantage of the 'provinces' is the comparative smallness of the fields, enabling a young sportsman to see more of the *hunting* than he can possibly do in a Midland crowd. There, amid those big black fences, he is likely to be too much taken up with the how and where he is to negotiate them, to be able to give the proper amount of attention to the hounds; unless, indeed, he is more superbly mounted than ingenuous youth generally is at starting; in which case, however, instead of watching hounds, he will most probably be over-riding them.

The advantages of the shires, which, with me, though a poor man, have outweighed all objections, I will try to sum up briefly.

I think, looking at the matter from a somewhat mercenary point of view, they give you the best value for your money, especially if you have to do as I had for many years, train for a single day's hunting twice or three times in the week, before long leave commenced. I tried Essex, a most sporting provincial country, and I tried Leicestershire, and I found that, on any given day, I was more certain of sport in the latter. On a bad scenting day on the plough (good scenting days are the exception anywhere) one spent it in walking after a fox over a not too engaging country. It

must be a very bad scenting day on the grass, during which you do not get at least one merry ten minutes over a glorious country, and the horses and hounds, as a sight alone, are worth the journey to see. Then, again, more sport is here generally compressed into the day, less time being spent going from covert to covert—a consideration for the man who has come some distance for his fun.

I remember once training to a provincial pack (not in Essex). We had a fairish run over a poor country, and killed our fox about 2 P.M. The master then made a little speech, saying that we had had a good day's sport, that hounds were a long way from kennel, so that it was not worth while drawing again; with which he and his pack jogged off to their teas. It reminded me forcibly of the 'Life of a Foxhound,' where someone asked the Squire, after a forty minutes' hunt, at the end of which they had drowned their fox, if he would not try for another, as it was early. 'No,' replied the master, shaking his head, 'we are fifteen miles from kennel, the hounds have had a good deal of fatiguing work in covert, and are satisfied with a novel but glorious finish. I shall not run the risk of tiring them more, perhaps for nothing, and doing away with that spirit which I hope the sport of the day has given to everyone

present.' And, lifting his hat-string high, he bowed and joined his huntsmen. Imagine Mr. Fernie or Mr. Wroughton making an oration like that !

It must be remembered, however, that this hunting at high pressure entails a far more expensive establishment, and that those who migrate to these favoured pastures are in duty and honour bound to pay well for their sport. In whatever else you economise, be liberal in this. There is no sport, giving the same amount of pleasure, for which you pay so little as for your hunting. I do not count the stable expenses, which are purely personal. Compare the rent paid for a moor, a river, or a forest, and the subscriptions given even by wealthy men to the 'sport of kings.' I am touching on delicate, perhaps dangerous, ground ; but I feel very strongly that the question will have to be faced in the near future, and that something will have to be done, in these days of rapid locomotion, to ensure that every man who rides over a country pays for that great privilege, even if only indirectly. I have known men, who have come from a distance to hunt in the Midlands, excuse themselves for sending a miserably inadequate donation to the hunts they honoured with their presence, by saying that they are paupers. If that is so (and I have

noticed that men who say this are generally many degrees removed from want), they certainly should not come to hunt in an expensive country. The question of the future, in the grazing countries especially, is that of wire. It appears to me that it is impossible that hunting can go on for many years in the happy-go-lucky way it has done in the past. Some sporting rights over a district will have to be obtained and paid for, and, if necessary, we hunting-men must dip our hands deeper into our pockets, especially those of us who are not landowners. A practical way of looking at the matter is this. A horse costs you roughly, taking into consideration wages, forage, and depreciation in value, 100*l.* a year. Would not most of us, if we cannot afford to increase our subscription, prefer to hunt with one horse less, if by doing so we could be sure of riding in safety over the country? I do not say that it will be necessary for all of us to take so drastic a measure as this, or to send 100*l.* annually to the wire fund. I merely put the matter in this light in answer to many who keep six to ten horses, and yet say their very moderate subscription is all they can afford. The remedy, I maintain, is, if necessary, to keep a smaller stud, and devote the money so saved to increasing their subscription. I am well aware that the question of acquiring definite sporting rights over a country bristles with

difficulties; but that is no reason for shelving it altogether, and I believe that most of the difficulties might be smoothed away by organisation, tact, and a judicious use of £ s. d.



CHAPTER II

THE HORSE ON WHICH TO HUNT

THIS is, of all subjects, the most difficult one on which to offer advice, and perhaps one of the most useless, for the man who attempts to buy hunters from any theoretical knowledge is sure to come to grief. One point, however, which I cannot too strongly impress on a young sportsman (and it is only to such that I would dare to offer advice at all) is to get a thoroughly made hunter to start with. A horse that knows his business will teach you yours, and give you that confidence which will enable you afterwards, should you wish, to make young horses. For a man with a small stud these latter, even allowing for their comparative cheapness, are an expensive luxury. Unless you wish to run great risk of permanently injuring your horse, it is madness to give a four-year-old a long day. The man with a large stud can afford to have him out for an hour or two and send him home. The poor man wants every horse in his stud to be a worker. Apart from the risk of injuring their

constitutions, these youngsters, unless they are clean-bred, cannot have the condition in them which is necessary for a long day's hunting; and of course they have their infantine ailments to come, and are more liable to throw out splints, curbs, &c. than your seasoned hunter. Therefore, to start with, buy the latter. He may cost you more, but he will give you infinitely better value for your money. Remember, too, that, putting on one side fancy prices, the initial outlay does not weigh very heavily in comparison with the other expenses connected with horse-keeping—the stabling, forage, grooming, &c. Therefore, never buy screws; they do not pay, as I can testify from experience.

You may possibly ask: 'What is a fancy price?' Well, I consider, for a man riding twelve to thirteen stone to hounds, anything over 150*l.* would come under that category. Of course, if you go in for fads as to colour, or want theoretical perfection of make and shape, combined with undeniable performance, twice that sum will not mount you, whatever weight you ride; but 100*l.* to 150*l.* ought to buy a thirteen-stone man a really good hunter fit to carry him in any country, especially if he can afford to lay out his money at the end, instead of the beginning, of the hunting season. This is, to my mind, by far the best plan in any case, as good light-weight horses are often sold in the

spring much below their intrinsic value, and you can make certain that they start the next season properly conditioned.

Before going further into the matter, you must allow me, at the risk of being tedious, and repeating what others before me have said much better, to impress upon you this question of condition. I do so because I believe it to be the most important point connected with the keeping of hunters to any man who really means to ride up to hounds. Perhaps I could not do better than urge you to read 'Nimrod' on the 'Condition of Hunters.' Much therein is contrary to the accepted theories of our day, and he is apt to be exceedingly and annoyingly dogmatic; but all his remarks on condition, properly so called, are sound, and should be laid to heart. On this point he did more than any other sporting writer of his day to rouse the 'popular conscience.' In spite, however, of all that has been said on this subject by him and others, many hunting-men still do not attach sufficient importance to it.

You see men, particularly soldiers, get together a stud of horses in September, or later, about which they know little, and expect to be carried well to the front by December, if not before. Perhaps it is fortunate that hounds do not really run their hardest for more than twenty to thirty minutes

many times in a season ; but it is for those rare yet priceless occasions that every keen sportsman wishes to be prepared. We soldiers train for years for one day of battle, which may never come ; similarly months of preparation are required for one ' good thing ' with hounds, which must come ; and I can conceive no greater misery to a good sportsman than to be out of it when it does.

As regards the number of horses needed, I shall base my estimate on Midland requirements, which are, as I have said, somewhat more exacting than elsewhere. I remember, some years ago, asking a youthful relative to come and put up with me for a month and bring his horses. He wrote back saying he would turn up on such-and-such a day with two, ' which,' he added, ' will do me four days a week.' Needless to say he ' did ' for them instead, for he was a straight going youngster, who would as soon have thought of going home before hounds as of shirking a big place on a half-tired horse.

You will find it, as I have said before, an economy in horse-flesh, though entailing an increase in wages, to have two horses out. It is hard, on a good scenting day especially, to have to go home early ; but it is a more than doubtful pleasure to ride a tired horse over a strongly fenced country. And it must be remembered that it is when

horses are leg-weary that they are most likely to lame themselves. Another thing to be considered is that, more often than not, the best sport is reserved for the afternoon, when the field has diminished considerably.

With six horses, having two out each day, you will be able to do four days' hunting a week, without making allowance for accidents, which you cannot expect to avoid. I am not referring to sprains and serious mishaps, which may necessitate laying the horse up for the season—these are frequent enough, goodness knows, and annoying enough; but to those minor accidents caused by blows, thorns, &c., which often make it necessary, or, at any rate, prudent, to leave an animal in when his turn comes round. Never be induced, if an animal is suffering from a blow or slight strain, to bring him out as long as there is any heat in the part affected, however sound he may appear to be. Whilst there is heat there is mischief, and if you value your horse you will find it better policy to leave him in until his legs are perfectly cool again. I have often, especially at the end of the season, pursued a different course, and have always had reason to regret doing so.

To allow, then, for these contingencies, if you mean to hunt for any period over a month, you should have two extra horses, making eight in all.

These, with a hack in addition, ought to do you well, and, with luck, enable you to squeeze in a fifth day pretty often. If, however, stern necessity forbids you to keep so large a stud, it is for you to decide either to hunt less frequently, do shorter days, or, taking the risks, keep one horse out all day.

Masters of Midland packs allow two horses per hunt servant for each day in the week they hunt, with two or three extra ones besides. This sounds a very liberal allowance, each horse coming out but once a week for half a day; but it must be remembered that, whilst they *are* out, these horses have considerably more to do than yours or mine; and I only mention the figures to show you what men, with the best of everything at their command, and doing things on a large scale, find from the experience of years to be the requisite minimum. However generous a master might be, he would hardly keep more horses than was necessary, and I am sure that, taking one season with another, they do not find the above proportions excessive. Only the other day I was going round the stable of a well-mounted pack which hunts over a strongly fenced country. It was towards the end of an open season, and the stud-groom was decidedly short of horses, though his stud consisted of the very best of fourteen-stone blood hunters ridden by light men.

I would remark incidentally that an open season is not necessarily the most expensive in horse-flesh. Given a stud of hunters in really good condition to start with, if you treat them fairly, and do not bring them out too often, my experience has been that you have fewer lame horses than in a season of long frosts, often followed by a week or two of good scenting weather. With the best of intentions it is very hard to keep horses really fit on a straw ride.

Let us turn now from the question of the size of the stud to that of the size of the steed.

Size This, I need hardly say, is very much a matter of weight, and, to a certain extent, of length of leg. A man of about 5 ft. 10 in., riding from twelve to thirteen stone, requires, I think, a horse of 15·3 to 16 hands. I look on this latter as the ideal height for a Leicestershire hunter, to carry thirteen or fourteen stone, combined with average length of leg. I do not think it looks well to see a very short, light man on big weight-carrying horses, nor can I see the use of it. Undoubtedly, small horses, if you can ride them, are handier and hardier than big ones, and carrying a fair weight, come round after an exhausting day quicker than their larger brethren, and of course, too, it is easier (and therefore cheaper) to get a good-shaped little one. In

saying this, I am, in all humility, differing from the former practice of a man who has many years ago forgotten more than I can ever hope to know of riding over Leicestershire, perhaps the most gallant veteran that this or any hunting country has ever seen, Mr. Tailby, the 'Squire' of Skeffington Hall. A very small, light man, he used, when master of the country now ruled by Mr. Fernie, to ride big horses up to several stone more than his weight, and he was undefeated; but I have seen Mr. Tailby, when well over seventy years of age, and with a recently broken thigh (he had broken every other bone in his body with apparently no effect on his iron nerve), I have seen him, I say, go right to the front on small horses; so that perhaps he may, in later life, have modified his views. In any case, it is impossible to draw any trustworthy deductions one way or the other from an instance so exceptional as the 'Squire.'

Since writing the above, I came across, by chance, the following words of wisdom on this subject by 'Brooksby,' whose practical experience of the requirements of the 'grass countries' is unrivalled. Hear what he says:

'A big, well-balanced horse can carry himself, and nine times out of ten will carry a rider too, be the latter qualified to do little more than merely

remain—it is more or less a matter of indifference to the former what the latter is about; they interfere but little with one another. A little horse, on the contrary, requires a master hand to do him justice when the going is deep and the fences tall and strong. It is recognised that horses of weight and substance go easier over the ground, tire less in jumping, and often scatter without inconvenience a fence that would turn a lighter animal on to his head; . . . the professional thrusters who have money or credit are seldom seen on little animals, the dealers keep very few of them, and the farmers find they don't pay. You must go through quite as many places in these countries of grass as you can ever jump over, and in so doing weight must tell. Sixteen hands, up to weight of a man in full bloom, sired by a thoroughbred, and with a dam whose pedigree has scarcely a suspicion of stain, such is the vehicle upon which a man of means is alone content to take his chance with the rest.'

But we are not all 'men of means,' worse luck!

You will probably object that in all that I have been saying I have been keeping exclusively in my mind's eye the Leicestershire hunter. I grant you that I have, because I believe him to be the type at which one should aim, for most of the counties in

which one is likely to hunt, and that he will carry you well to the front in nearly all. There are doubtless hot, impetuous brutes which a strong horseman *can* get on terms with in the large pastures of the Midlands, and which yet would be absolutely unsafe conveyances in a blind, cramped country; but, generally speaking, it is, I think, an accepted fact, that a horse which will carry a man temperately and well over the Pytchley and Quorn domains will be a good conveyance in any but a few quite exceptional countries. It is a great mistake to imagine, as some do, that in the former a *clever* horse is not required. It is far from being a case of doing nothing all day but jump big up-standing fences at steeple-chase pace; and in no country, certainly not in Leicestershire, which is hilly, should anyone who wishes to enjoy his hunting, and let his friends do the same, willingly keep a puller. You will find him the slowest horse you can ride, as, however fast he may be able to gallop, with hounds you will seldom be able to extend him. I am dwelling on this subject because people sometimes recommend you to buy a raking, tearing brute, which they acknowledge is no good to them in the provinces, but which, they say, is 'just the horse for Leicestershire.' I don't know if these good people imagine that Leicestershire foxes *always* run up wind for half an hour,

absolutely straight, over 'cock' fences, guiltless of wire, or that we never have a nasty bottom to cross, or a road to jump out of, because the sort of run described above is the only one in which such a horse could be anything like an agreeable mount. What we want, for most countries, is a short-legged, thoroughbred hunter up to fourteen stone. Few of us are lucky enough to obtain him without a stain in his pedigree; but all men who ride under fourteen stone should, I believe, get as near to this type as their purse will allow.

There is nothing in this world in which perfection is so hard to obtain as in horse-flesh, and most of us must perforce be content with something a good deal short of it.

A lover of horses would, I imagine, fain be the possessor of a stud of one size and stamp: in a word, 'a level lot'; but you must remember that a collection such as this, like all other collections, is an expensive luxury, and, even with ample means at your disposal, can only be obtained at the cost of considerable time and trouble. A stud of this sort bears somewhat the same relation to that of the sportsman of moderate means; as a book-shelf of first editions, or 'éditions de luxe' to the common workaday volumes which you and I keep on our library shelves. These latter may serve every useful purpose, but do not please the taste and eye

of a connoisseur to the same extent. Most of us must be satisfied to have our book-shelves and our boxes filled with good useful articles ; so, should you belong to the many, I would counsel you, at starting, to put on one side all 'luxurious' ideas, and, without being over-particular about looks, never let slip an opportunity of securing a horse which you know to be a good and stout performer, practically sound, at a fair price. They go in all shapes and sizes and colours. I can only think of two things which I should avoid at any cost in buying a hunter, unless (and you see there is always a saving clause) he is an *exceptional* performer going at an exceptional price. These two things are :

1. Bad shoulders.

2. Too great length of leg.

It is very hard to be dogmatic on the first point without having a ride on the animal and feeling

how he moves them. A horse with a
Shoulders

really bad shoulder cannot move well over ridge and furrow or down hill. Many tyros, through want of knowledge of the anatomy of the animal, confuse a high wither with good shoulders, and *vice versâ*. The two formations are often found together, but one is not at all necessarily the corollary of the other. A low, somewhat coarse wither, well covered with muscle, when combined

with a sloping shoulder-blade, is highly desirable, and means weight-carrying power ; but it is not uncommon to hear men ‘ crab ’ horses thus formed for having what they call ‘ coarse shoulders.’ A straight shoulder, by which I mean an upright shoulder-blade, is of course an abomination for a hunter. I have known many horses with this defect jump well, but they can only go on doing so at the expense of their fore-legs, and, if they make a mistake, they are naturally not in a position to recover themselves ; but this is a point on which it is unnecessary to dwell.

Do not touch a leggy horse. Horses of this stamp are generally well-bred, pleasant to ride, and
Leggy
horses often good enough jumpers ; but they can seldom stay, they generally throw their legs about and sprawl when jumping, and consequently nearly always, when tired, hit themselves all round. As a rule, too, they are delicate, seldom good doers, and therefore not a credit to your stable. With care they may make good and showy chargers, but as hunters are to be avoided like poison.

If I have not advised you to do so before, get and study Hayes’ ‘ Points of the Horse.’ It is most sound, but should be read, as indeed should everything worth the reading, critically and not blindly.

You will, of course, when young at the game of buying horses, call in a veterinary surgeon to give

his advice as to the animal's soundness.

Veterinary
advice

I find it at all times the most satisfactory course to pursue, both for seller and buyer; but in early days it is folly to purchase relying on your own judgment on this all-important point. You must not of course expect to get a theoretically sound horse who has done any work, and personally I should rather distrust an aged hunter who could show an absolutely clean sheet. He can hardly have done much hunting. Employ, if possible, a veterinary surgeon who hunts or who has hunted regularly. He will be able to give an opinion of the animal's practical soundness much better than a theorist or vet. without practical experience of a hunter's accidents and ailments. Another thing, in future years, when you begin to use your own judgment a little, you must bear in mind that even the best and cleverest practitioners have their little fads sometimes, which you must make allowances for. One of the best I know will very rarely pass a horse sound. His fad (if I must call it so) is feet, which he measures most carefully with callipers, and if he finds one-hundredth part of an inch difference in the size of a pair of feet a black mark is put against the horse. I now always use my own judgment on this point, and if the feet are

not obviously uneven, trust to luck and take my chance ; and must say that I have never regretted doing so ; but still, you must remember that it is better to lose three or four good horses through over-caution than be saddled with one ‘stiff-un.’

There is another point which I am almost afraid of touching on for fear of causing you to scoff, and perhaps throw the book aside as the work of a sentimental idiot ; I mean that portion of a horse which, for want of a better name, I must call his moral side, or, as Fitz-Wygram boldly names it, the ‘animal soul.’ We forget this, most of us altogether, or do not attach any importance to it. Make and shape have nothing to tell us concerning it, and yet I have no manner of doubt that it exists and must be taken into account, even though unconsciously, by anyone who would aspire to finished horsemanship, which depends so largely on subtle indefinable sympathy between horse and man.

A horse is not merely a machine, he is a sentient, highly impressionable being, fired with a generous courage at one moment, and swayed by unreasoning terror the next ; full of whims, temper, and tricks, much as a child is, and, like children, showing every variety of disposition. I have laid stress on this to impress on you how futile it is to estimate a horse’s powers any more than you would

a man's by his exterior alone. A man may have the form and strength of Hercules and the *Apollo Belvedere* combined, and yet be a cowardly slug-gard, unenterprising and good for nothing; and so a faultlessly shaped hunter may, from want of courage or a sulky temper, prove inferior as a conveyance to a mean-looking animal with a larger heart. Not for a moment do I wish to appear to underrate the importance of true form and physical development; they are essential adjuncts to prowess in athlete or horse. I merely warn you against treating as of no account the unseen qualities of this 'animal soul.' To produce anything like perfection these two elements—the physical and moral—must harmonise and be in proportion, for it is manifestly useless to have an animal filled with a fire and spirit beyond the limits of the powers of his bodily structure; but if he must be somewhat lacking in one of these I would prefer, for a hunter, that it should not be in the latter.

I can almost hear the 'end of the century' sportsman laugh at all this, and, maybe, I *am* a sentimental idiot, and the horse, what they assert him to be, a 'silly brute' controlled only by fear. This theory of government may be simple, but appears to me sadly crude, incomplete, and unconvincing. Adopt it, and how will you account for the undoubted love most good hunters have for the sport,

for the keen interest with which many an old horse watches hounds and instinctively turns with them ; or, lastly, for the eager appreciation of a game of polo shown by a good polo pony ? ‘ They hate it, and only play for fear of being licked if they don’t,’ is the reply. No, my ‘ end of the century ’ friends, I think you are wrong there. Unless the spirit of emulation stirred your pony almost as much as it does you, how can he, do you suppose, respond to your every wish, almost before you know it yourself, as he must do, to be a good polo pony in a modern fast game ? Personally, I have owed too much to the courage and intelligence of the noble animal ever to libel him by subscribing to this doctrine. Do so, and you will lose one of the most subtle pleasures in riding, and deservedly, for you will thereby lose that close sympathy with your horse, which, for the time, makes you and him one being—you will lose a part of yourself.

Racing men, who will hardly be accused of useless sentiment in their relations with horse-flesh, recognise the truth of what I have been urging, as is shown by the fancy prices paid, for fashionably bred yearlings, for their blood alone—that is, in a great measure, for the qualities of courage and endurance which they may reasonably be expected to inherit. Stonehenge says : ‘ It is admitted on the Turf that high breeding is of more consequence

than external shape, and that of two horses, one perfect in shape, but of an inferior strain of blood, and the other of the most winning blood, but not so well formed in shape, the latter will be the most likely to perform to the satisfaction of his owner on the race course.'

Encourage your groom, too, to believe in the individuality of his charges. Most good grooms do so, and study the humours and whims of each horse as a good mother those of her children. Unless he does, he will never get the most out of your *best* horses, for it is they who are usually the most nervous and highly strung, and, therefore, if treated purely as machines, the most troublesome to feed.

Whilst we are in the sentimental vein, let me, at a risk of being deemed discursive, plead for a little pity at your hands for your friend who has carried you well through several seasons, and, when the time comes that, owing to age and infirmity contracted in your service, he is past your work, do not send him up to the hammer, but think for a moment what will be the last days of a hardy worked and well-spent life which has been passed ministering to your pleasure. Picture the misery of it to this carefully nurtured animal, who has had the best of everything all his days—the exposure, the foul stable, the possible ill-treatment

which must fall to his lot when he reaches the cab rank.

If I have convinced you that there is any truth in what I have said before, surely a good horse is your neighbour, and claims a little of that duty all religions teach to be his due. Can you stand unconcernedly by 'The Sticks' or 'The Holt' whence you and he have enjoyed so many a merry burst together; or, later, can you sit down in your cosy dining-room to eat your evening meal, with an easy conscience, and think of the old horse standing there shivering on a London cab stand? Would he never visit you, think you, in your after-dinner dreams, looking at you sadly and reproachfully with the question: 'Is this my return for a life's work?'

I am not pleading for the 'brutes.' There are enough of them, I fear me, to fill the cab shafts of England. But spare the gallant horse who falls by the way. In most countries there is more than one good but needy sportsman who will be glad to take him, and let him finish his days quietly at the sport he loves as well as you. Or there is always the merciful bullet. Don't do a cruel and ungrateful act for 30%.

CHAPTER III

THE STABLE

IN describing the hunting stable, I am going in for no luxuries, but propose to detail the essentials for keeping hunters in perfect health and condition without any unnecessary extravagance.

The necessary conditions for all stables are :

1. Good drainage,
2. Proper ventilation,
3. Dryness,
4. Light;

and with these are connected warmth and space.

The above four are in what I consider their order of importance.

Drainage is undoubtedly the most important matter connected with stable hygiene. Without it the most perfectly built, and best ventilated, stable can be but a fever trap.

I strongly advise you not to have anything to do with underground drains. They are very apt to get out of order, and require more care than

you can get most grooms to bestow on such a matter. If, however, you should find yourself temporarily occupying a stable fitted with them, be most careful to see that they are thoroughly flushed daily, some disinfecting powder sprinkled down them, and the traps removed and cleaned.

Too little care is often taken with the foundation of a stable. Anyone who has been present at the taking up of an old stable floor and smelt the foul soil beneath it will realise what I mean. For perfect health, the foundation of a stable should consist first of all of a foot or more of hard gravel, on the top of which should lie a bed of good concrete, one foot deep. Above this the flooring, which should, for purposes of surface drainage, be at least a foot above the ground level.

Local consideration must to a certain extent affect the choice of a flooring, and I do not propose to go into details.

The essentials for a good floor are: that it should be impervious to moisture, should afford facilities for surface drainage, should be easily cleaned, should be as near as possible level, and not slippery.

The old-fashioned cobble stones are objectionable, as they are difficult to clean.

Ordinary bricks are porous, wear irregularly,

and so afford receptacles for filth. One of the best bricks I know is a blue Staffordshire brick, supplied, I believe, by the St. Pancras Iron Works Company, which has a groove running down its centre. This has the advantage of making the drainage run down the brick and not along the joints.

My own system is to have a gutter running down the middle of each box, starting from the centre, with a slope of 1 in 60.

This gutter runs into a main surface drain, which discharges itself into an underground one. This point of discharge should be as distant as possible from the stable—certainly not nearer than twelve feet.

There is an excellent work (which I had to study when going through a veterinary course at Aldershot) treating of this and all subjects connected with healthy stables: 'Veterinary Hygiene,' by Veterinary-Major Smith, F.R.C.V.S., which is well worth getting by those interested in these matters, as it treats most exhaustively of my next point—Ventilation.

This is so important a matter that I cannot help dwelling on it for a little, though its importance is now pretty generally understood, even by old-fashioned civilian grooms.

Personally, I began keeping a stable just about

the time when the first edition of Fitz-Wygram's 'Horses and Stables' was published, and so was early imbued with the absolute necessity of plenty of fresh air. I had at that time great difficulty in getting the civilian groom of the period to conform to my views. Directly my back was turned his one idea was to stuff up every hole and chink through which the pure air could enter, so as to get a 'nice warm stable.' A cold stable will be bad for horses' coats, and they may want more corn ; but I am quite certain horses will be healthier in it than in a warm one, unless the latter is artificially heated and perfectly ventilated. As a rule, a hot stable is a badly ventilated one, the heat coming from foul air. In a cold stable, as long as there are no draughts, and it is free from damp, you can keep the horse comfortable enough by extra clothing and bandaging. Draughts, of course, are to be avoided, and any sudden changes of temperature.

The ventilation in my own stable, which I think is always quite sweet, is of a very simple nature, and could be readily put into any
Ventilation boxes at a small cost. About one foot above the ground, behind each horse, is a ventilator, 9 inches by 3 inches. Over this is a wooden screen covered with zinc, standing two inches from the wall, and running up to a height of three feet from

the floor. This allows the air to enter from below without striking on the horse when he is lying down.

Above the horses' heads, about one foot below the ceiling, is a line of air bricks which allow the egress of the heated foul air, which, as you know, ascends, and is replaced by the pure air entering through the ventilators below. Besides this, each range of boxes has a shaft of one foot square running through the loft over it, and surmounted by a cowl.

I do not put this forward as a perfect system of ventilation, but I have found it satisfactory, and it is simple and inexpensive.

Dryness is a matter intimately connected with flooring and drainage, as well as, to a certain extent, with ventilation. It is absolutely essential to the well-being of your horses, which will never thrive in a damp stable.

In connection with this point, I would caution you not to allow your groom to wash the floor of a box, unless you can give two clear days for it to dry. Some men are fond of doing so, but it is a dangerous custom, often causing a horse to catch cold, or even suffer from rheumatism.

New stables, before being occupied, should be well aired. A charcoal fire in the centre of each box does this very well.

Light is another essential. Without it, horses' eyesight becomes affected, and a dark stable is nearly always a dirty, and therefore a foul, stable.

Light
'Veterinary Hygiene' says: 'Light is as necessary for horses as pure air; this point must be attended to, and a sufficiency of windows provided—one large one in the wall behind every two horses, and one to every horse, overhead, will be found ample.'

In writing of a hunting stable, it is fair to assume that nothing but loose boxes will be used. To tie a hunter up in a stall is false economy, and cruel. He cannot rest comfortably, undue strain is thrown on the back tendons, through the horse being compelled to stand (as he is in nearly all stalls) on a slope, and the animal, when tired after a day's hunting, cannot restore his circulation by gentle exercise, as he does moving about a loose box.

Boxes
The dimensions of these should be $14 \times 14 \times 14$ feet, giving 2,744 cubic feet per horse, rather more than twice as much as is allowed in the newest military stables, where, of course, horses stand in stalls with bales as partitions. I have, however, kept hunters in good condition for many years in boxes $14 \times 9 \times 10$ feet (high), giving only 1,260 cubic feet per horse; but, were I building, I would not have them less than the larger dimensions given.

Stalls, if you have them, should be at least ten feet long and six feet wide.

Stalls

As good a form of manger as I know is one invented, I believe, by Captain Steeds, of

Manger

Clonsilla, near Dublin. It consists of a cauldron, ten inches in diameter, let into a bed of concrete. The sill of this bed is about a foot wide, and stands at 2 ft. 6 in. from the floor. The cauldron is easily cleaned out, and the sill is so wide that there is no possibility of a horse catching hold of it. Since using these mangers, which I have now in every box, crib-biting has been absolutely unknown in my stable, and I believe the inventor's experience has been the same. Of course they have their disadvantages. To begin with, they are somewhat unsightly ; then the solid bed projecting out into the box, a horse sometimes, when pawing, may hit them with his fore-leg ; and, lastly, I have known a horse jump up and land with one fore-leg in the cauldron. There is no danger in this, however, if the bed of concrete is quite solid below. If not, the horse may break it, and cut himself.

Water should be always in front of horses. I arrange this, cheaply and simply, by means of a chain round a plain oak bucket, hung at about three feet from the ground. These buckets should of course be cleaned out daily.

Water

Above the stables I would have nothing. Rooms or a corn loft overhead are impediments to ventilation. Having the former means
Lofts constant noise, and hunters, more than most horses, require rest and quiet when in the stable. A corn loft over the stable is bad for the corn. Even if no stable fumes can enter into it, it is certain to become too hot, which makes the oats have a tendency to ferment. If, for reasons of space, you must have your loft above the horses have a concrete floor, avoid any direct communication with the stable, and have plenty of through ventilation by means of windows and air bricks.

The question of quiet for hunters is, I am sure a most important one. Years ago, when hunting from barracks, I never could keep flesh on my horses. Yet, when I took them away, with the same men looking after them, and with harder work to do, they always used to improve in condition and general appearance. I think one of the reasons of this was that in barracks they were never really quiet. The stables were not my own, men were in and out all day, and with a barrack-room overhead there was never any peace and quiet for the unfortunate hunters. Needless to say this affects well-bred nervous horses more than their hairy-heeled brethren. I think horses in general are sociable animals, and in most of my boxes I have a railed

partition, high enough to prevent their biting each other. In a larger stable, I would, however, always have two or three isolated boxes for sick animals, and for horses (and there are some) who do better quite by themselves. There are brutes, too, who, if they can sniff at a neighbour through the bars, take to kicking the box to pieces. These also I should condemn to solitary confinement.

The adjuncts to a hunting stable are a good forage barn, with stone-floored partitions for oats, an expense store or feeding place, in which to keep the forage for each day's consumption, a cleaning or tack room, and a best saddle room.

In the cleaning room is done all the cleaning of the saddlery, and in it the men keep their 'tack' and grooming tools. It is provided with a copper for the stable cookery, and is generally the rough workshop of the establishment.

The saddle room, on the other hand, should be kept entirely for clean saddlery and harness; and everything hung up there, as well as the room itself, should be fit for inspection by the master at any time during the day. Most hunting establishments are also provided with one or two rooms for valets' cleaning rooms. Where there are two, the second horseman can, without inconvenience, clean his livery in one of them.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL STABLE MANAGEMENT IN A HUNTING
STABLE

I do not think I can do better than give the Rules for Stables, which I have found answer in my own, and which are as follows :—

RULES FOR STABLES

6.30. A.M.—Water—pick out feet ; sponge dock and nostrils ; remove dung and soiled part of litter, and place bedding out to dry. Sweep out box. Remove clothing and bandages and place them in the air. Clean body, legs, head, mane and tail ; clean headstall and replace it. Put on fresh day clothing.

7.15.—Feed.—Breakfast.

8.0.—Saddle and bridle for exercise. Before going out, open all doors and windows, make arrangements to have floor of all boxes swept quite clean. Hay up. Brush and air clothing.

Directly horses are back from exercise, groom thoroughly. Litter down.

12.0.—Water and feed. Arrange stable ; have night rug brushed and folded up ; bedding thoroughly turned over.

3.0.—Feed.

5.0.—Hay up ; remove dung, &c. ; groom well with wisp ; put on night clothing.

6.0.—Water and feed.

9.0.—Stud groom to visit stables, feeding horses if necessary.

Wednesday, Saturday.—Give linseed mash (unless horse is hunting next day).

The manger to be well scrubbed with salt the next morning.

To make a Mash.—Take a clean galvanised-iron bucket. Put at bottom a half feed of crushed oats. Fill bucket half full of bran. Pour *boiling* water on the bran until it will absorb no more. Then put a layer of dry bran on top to keep in the heat. Leave it for two hours ; add a handful of common salt, and stir it just before giving. If linseed be given, leave it soaking in *boiling* water until it gets into a jelly ; then put it on top of wet bran, and cover with the dry bran as before.

Do not :

(a) Remove saddle or pad until ready to dry back, not until at least twenty minutes

- after horse comes in. (Girths of side saddle not to be touched for this period.)
- (b) Leave legs, especially heels, wet for an instant. When horse returns wet, put on drying bandages at once; by the time he is groomed, legs will be dry.
 - (c) Give hay at feed before work, or any food within one hour of horse going out.
 - (d) Feed without chaff.
 - (e) Feed within one hour before horse is watered.

In a properly ordered stable a place must be made for everything, and everything must be in its place. Otherwise much confusion, loss of time, and ill-feeling is sure to arise.

Each stableman is responsible for his own grooming kit, and for the kit of the horses under his charge, and is to report any deficiencies or damage to the stud groom immediately. Otherwise he will be held responsible.

Each stableman's kit consists of—

1 body brush.	1 sponge.
1 dandy „	1 chamois leather.
1 water „	3 rubbers.
1 curry comb.	1 basket.
1 hoof pick.	1 skip.
1 burnisher.	1 stable lamp.

Each horse has—

1 day rug.	1 roller.
1 night ,,	1 head collar.
1 blanket.	1 set best bandages.
1 set drying bandages.	

HUNTERS.

Day before horse goes out carefully look round shoes, see clenches are firm, and that inner under-edge of hind shoes is not sharp.

Morning of hunting.—Give half bucket of water, and a feed of corn as early as possible, allowing time to give a few go-downs of water and a little corn one hour before horse starts.

On return from hunting throw on clothing and give gruel, rubbing his ears if exhausted. See that he stales.

Then give chilled water and hay, brush dirt off legs, wash feet, bandage loosely, dry neck, head, and shoulders, throw rug on, and give mash.

When horse has had this, finish him off, put on night clothing, remove bandages, dry legs, put on dry bandages, and feed with dry corn. Visit him the last thing at night, and give him another feed of corn, and see that his ears are dry and warm.

Gruel.—Before noon on a hunting morning, for each horse going out, put one quart oatmeal in

bucket. Pour on it as much *boiling* water as it will take up. Cover up bucket, and leave it before fire until horse comes in.

Mash.—In another bucket make a mash as directed above. When horse returns, pour cold water on the oatmeal and give it to horse chilled. When ready, mix up mash.

Day after hunting, hand rub legs twice.

CARRIAGES.

Directions for care of.

1. Linen cover should always be kept on.
2. Carriage should never be put away dirty.
3. When washing, keep out of sun.
4. Do not use a spoke brush.
5. Never let water dry by itself on carriage.
6. Be careful to grease bearings of fore carriage.
7. Examine constantly all bolts, &c. Wrench up when required.

Any small repairs to be done at once.

8. Axles want cleaning at least once in three months. Oil at same time with neat's foot oil.

9. Keep a small bottle of black japan, or enamel, and a brush to paint treads, steps, lamps, &c., laying it on as *thin* as possible.

10. Pneumatic tyres to be kept always well blown out.

The secret of good stable management is regularity—regularity in feeding, regularity in exercise, regularity in grooming.

Considering the accommodation given them, and the amount of forage allowed, few horses can compare with troop horses, as far as appearance is concerned ; yet they often find themselves under the charge of a man not well versed in stable management. The reason for this is, I take it, the fact that if a man sticks to the letter of the Queen's Regulations as to the care of troop horses, he cannot go far wrong.

There is a good deal in the following which only affects the stud groom ; but I give to each of my helpers a printed copy of the Rules, which are simple enough, so that no man can say he does not know.

The first thing you will notice which is different from what is done in most stables is the hour for exercise.

Grooms, as a rule, love to get their exercise over before breakfast. It saves a certain amount of time ; but, in my opinion, at the expense

Exercise of the exercise and of the horses. Early exercise in the winter months means a start in the dark, which is liable to cause accidents, through the stud groom being unable to properly inspect the saddling and bridling up. The groom, too,

being human, is in a hurry to get back to his breakfast, and the exercise is apt to be curtailed in consequence. Lastly, and of more importance than anything, the horses are not groomed directly they return. The men want to be off to feed themselves. They leave their charges, at the best, bandaged and loosely rugged for half or three-quarters of an hour; whereas it is most advisable that horses should be groomed directly they come in. Apart from the risks of catching cold by being left, the pores of their skin are open from exercise, and the grooming will do them twice as much good now as later.

The next thing that many civilian grooms do not understand, or like, is putting the litter out
the first thing, and not replacing it until
after the mid-day stable hour. ‘It makes
the yard in such a mess.’ It is most important,
however, if you want stables to be thoroughly
sweet, to insist on their doing this. You can then
see that the floors of boxes are swept perfectly
clean, and nothing disinfects them better than
being exposed for a few hours each day to the
fresh air. The litter also lasts better when put
out daily, and well turned over once or twice. For
wet weather it is a good thing to have litter sheds.
Bad grooms love to tuck their litter under the
mangers (with the pattern mentioned above, this is

impossible), quite the worst place for it. If any part of the box more than another should be kept pure and sweet it is the place where its occupant feeds. The ammonia fumes, too, are injurious to his eyes when standing over his manger, as he is bound to do when racked up in the morning. During the hunting season, when all the horses are not required daily for exercise, a reliable man should be left in, to see to various things that have to be done.

He should be ordered by the stud groom to go round and see that all unoccupied boxes have doors and windows opened to the fullest extent, that all the floors are clean and free from droppings, that the clothing is hung up (if fine) to air, instead of being, as is so often the case, tucked into the manger; and, finally, that all the racks are filled with hay ready for the horses' return.

Clothing should be well brushed as well as aired daily, and the same rug should not be next the horse's skin night and day.

As regards exercising in clothing, that is a question which so much depends on the weather that no hard and fast rule need be laid down. Personally, I am against unduly coddling hunters. In the way of business they have to do a lot of slow work on very inclement days, without any protection, and, if you exercise at the time I have

laid down, I do not think it will be often necessary to rug up for exercise.

The morning exercise should be looked upon by the stud groom as a most important duty.

Exercise If carried out, as it often is, in a careless and slovenly fashion, the health of the horse suffers, and accidents are very apt to occur.

The stud groom should always take it out himself, and, riding in rear, check all straggling, and insist on the men sitting properly on their horses. Under no circumstances should he permit horses to be ridden without saddles. It is a frequent cause of accidents and sore backs. Smoking at exercise should not be allowed. Apart from the fact that a gentleman's stud going along the road ridden by men smoking clay pipes does not look well, I think the practice a dangerous one. Each man has generally a horse to lead, and to ride one horse properly and lead another is enough to occupy a groom's hands and head. If he is smoking a pipe, sparks are apt to fly about with disastrous results, or the pipe goes out and has to be relit with reins hitched round the rider's arm ; not a safe proceeding, when leading spirited horses.

Stopping at public-houses during exercise should of course be unheard of in a decent gentleman's stable, yet it is not so uncommon as it should be. If you find your horses wanting to

pull up at public-houses, within a five-mile radius of your house, you will be pretty safe in getting rid of your head man.

Directly the horses return from exercise they should be groomed. One out of each pair of horses will generally have to wait his turn. He should be bandaged and rugged up loosely until the groom is able to attend to him. Should the animals come in with legs wet, all the horses should be bandaged up immediately. Their bodies can then be dried, and the bandages removed, by which time the legs will be nearly dry.

Each horse in my stable has two sets of bandages, the rough or drying bandages being white, whilst the others are blue. I can then see at once that the former are only used for their proper purpose, viz.: to save time in drying the legs, and not left on permanently, as lazy stablemen are apt to do, to save the trouble of drying the legs properly.

The evening stable hour is a most important one, and should be mainly devoted to wisping.

Using a wisp properly is somewhat of an Wispig art, which is seen to perfection in the best of our racing stables. Its object is not primarily to make the horse's coat look well—though it has this effect—but to brace his muscles up and give them tone; much in the same way as shampooing and massage act on the human athlete. A hunter

in condition is, or should be, much like a man in training. Both, when really fit, will stand much punishment in the way of bumps and bruises, which would incapacitate them if soft and flabby. Wisp-ing is an important aid to obtaining this condition.

The day before a horse is to go out hunting the stud groom should carefully see to his
Shoes shoes. Inattention to this is the cause of much annoyance, and needless accidents.

The two things he should notice are : first, that all the clenches are down and the nails good ; and, secondly, that the inner under-edge of each hind shoe is rounded and not sharp. Attention to the first point will prevent your casting shoes ; if the second is seen to, you won't have horses laid up from over-reaches.

I maintain that, unless a horse has bad feet, he should never cast a shoe when out. It has happened to me very seldom during the last six years.

My shoeing-smith lives in the village, and comes in every morning to see to things which want doing. When I first came here I found two shoeing-smiths, three or four miles off, respectively, had the monopoly of the hunting work. They had more than they could properly attend to in the winter, and were rather independent in consequence, and of course they could not come over to my stable daily.

The village blacksmith was a worthy and honest man, but had never shod 'nag' horses in his life, nothing but cart-horses of neighbouring farmers. He was modestly rather reluctant to try his hand on hunters, but I determined to endeavour to teach him, especially as he was not conceited, and professed his willingness to do what he was told. Soldiering had taught me the theory of shoeing, and a little of its practice; whilst a good model of a horse's foot, unrasped and with a shoe properly fitted, was a great assistance to my blacksmith friend. Altogether our joint experiments turned out very well.

I give this somewhat long and personal story because I believe it would often pay to have a good local shoeing-smith taught how to shoe hunters, rather than employ a man from a distance. The great thing is to have him on the spot. There is no such great mystery in shoeing a horse. If the man will only let the foot alone as much as possible, never, under any circumstances, rasp the outer crust, and take the trouble to fit the shoe to the foot instead of the foot to the shoe, he cannot go far wrong.

Over-reaches are caused by the under inner edge of the hind shoe striking the fore leg, usually in jumping. They occur most frequently in heavy ground. It is obvious that if this edge of the shoe is rounded off no serious accident can

happen ; what would have been a cut with a sharp edge is only a bruise with a rounded one. It is difficult, however, to get a shoeing-smith to realise the importance of this, more especially men who are in the habit of shoeing slow-moving horses. My friend did not at first ; and my groom also, not exercising proper supervision, within a month I had two very serious over reaches, in one case a back tendon being nearly severed. This caused a determined reading of the riot act, since which over-reaches have been practically unknown in my stable, and in the few instances in which they have occurred have been quite unimportant.

It must be borne in mind that though the shoe may be properly made at starting, this underedge will wear sharp, and wants constantly rounding off with the rasp. I cannot lay too much stress on this subject, because your shoeing-smith probably does not sufficiently realise its importance, and will make all sorts of objections to these directions being carried out. He will very likely try and make out that he cannot round off a cold shoe without removing it. This is all nonsense. He can, and I strongly advise you to insist on his doing so.

Do not have your shoes too heavy. Ten to twelve ounces is quite enough for any hunter's shoe to weigh.

A set of shoes should last three weeks to a month, and even if not worn out should always be removed and refitted at the end of the latter period. I pay my man four shillings a set, which includes nailing up and rounding off edges ; and should I cast a shoe, which very rarely happens, he has to replace it free of charge. For further details concerning shoeing you cannot do better than consult Fitz-Wygram.

On the morning of hunting endeavour, if you can, not to let the horse know that he is going out.

Morning of
hunting Some horses are very quick at finding this out, if the stable routine is altered in their case, and will not feed in consequence. I like to get a horse to take one, and if possible two, small feeds before he starts. He can only manage the latter when the meet is near, and the start late in consequence.

Some grooms have a mania for 'docking' their horses of their water previous to hunting. I am sure it is a great mistake and cruel. If a Water horse has water constantly before him, as a hunter should have, he will not drink too much overnight, and he can safely have half a bucket the first thing in the morning, besides a few go-downs an hour before he starts. Remember he has a long day before him, and has no second horseman out with a flask.

In connection with this subject, I should like to say a few words as to the advisability of taking a horse in to gruel when out at all late.

Gruel

I think (with one's second horse, or if you have been riding one all day) it is both a kindness and advantageous if you have more than ten miles home, to take a horse in, let him stale, have a little gruel, and a mouthful of hay.

Many men will say to you : ' Oh, no, never go in ; much better to jog a horse home and get him into his own stable.' But I am afraid in many cases they either want to get home, or forget that they themselves have broken their fast, and slaked their thirst, during the day, whilst their horses have not, although Nature means them to do so more frequently than we men. Of course, if you are going in to liquor up, smoke and ' coffee-house,' leaving your horse to the tender mercies of a strange groom in a draughty stable, it will do him more harm than if he had gone straight home ; but if you are sportsman enough to see that your horse is properly looked after before you go in and refresh yourself, you will find that he will travel home with you all the fresher, and, if the day has been an exhausting one, come round quicker than if he had had a long jog home on an empty stomach.

You will find, under 'gruel' and 'mash,' the routine I have carried out on every hunting day.

The great thing is to see that the water is boiling. The gruel is then ready to give to the horse

Return from hunting directly he gets in, *as soon as he has staled.*

It is most important to see that he does this. Years ago I lost a valuable hunter from uræmic poisoning, through my groom neglecting to do so.

If a horse is very tired there are few things he seems to like more, or which refresh him more, than having his ears rubbed. He will put down his head to have this operation performed, and hold it there almost any length of time with the utmost satisfaction. He can now have a little chilled water and hay, and whilst munching this can be roughly dried. When this is done, give him a bit of mash, and leave him quiet for ten minutes to eat it. He will not take long finishing after this. As long as he is quite dry and warm, especially in his extremities, it will do. I am no believer in grooming a tired hunter too much. I know I should not like it after a hard day myself, but should pray to be left alone as soon as possible. As soon, then, as you find him quite dry, particularly his legs and ears, he can be rugged up and left, and a feed of dry corn given him. The only time I would not give this is when the horse is very tired, in which case he will probably digest a linseed mash with crushed corn better.

The stud groom should always visit a horse that has been out, the last thing before turning in himself, to give him another feed of corn, and see that his ears are dry, and that he is generally comfortable.

I shall devote another chapter to hunters' ailments ; but would impress on you here the importance of either you or your stud groom examining a hunter most carefully directly he comes in. Here, if anywhere, ' a stitch in time saves nine,' and a blow or slight strain, or bump on the back, which, if left, will lay the horse by for some time, yields quickly to immediate treatment.

On the day following I like my groom to hand-rub the horses' legs well twice during the day.

Day after Even if not filled it braces them up and
hunting gives the tendons and ligaments tone.

Also, when doing so, he feels any slight thing which may be amiss, such as the thickening of the tendon, or the presence of a thorn.

There is another thing, which I should perhaps have mentioned before, of considerable importance

Saddling for the stud groom to see to himself, and
and bridling that is, the saddling and bridling of the
hunter going out. Some men are careless about this, and leave it to the helper who looks after the horse, the result being a sore back or a horse upset through wrong biting. With a lady's horse care in

saddling up is doubly important. I remember once having a horse of my wife's laid up with wrung withers. I could not make it out, as the horse had been hunted regularly with this same saddle, which had never touched him before. I did not happen to be out that day, but she told me the horse had been wriggling and going uncomfortably all day. On making inquiries I found the saddle had been put on by an ignorant stable lad, and tightly girthed up a great deal too far forward. There was nothing whatever amiss with the saddle, and the horse was ridden in it regularly afterwards without anything having to be done to it. The stud groom should put every saddle on himself, and inspect every bridle before the horse leaves the stable.

CHAPTER V

FEEDING OF HUNTERS

THERE is no part of the stud groom's work which equals this in importance, and it is the thing of all others which you must trust to him. I always impress on mine that the stable is judged by its bad doers and not by its good. There are some horses (not always one's best) that any fool can get to look well. Gross feeders of an easy-going, and sometimes unenterprising, disposition, they will do well on anything. It is the nervous, delicate feeders, wanting special care and attention, which soon show the difference between a good and a bad groom. I remember one battery of Horse Artillery at Aldershot which had not one horse in the stables looking bad. Its horses were the ordinary animals supplied by the remount depôt, getting the not excessive Government ration of 10 lbs. oats, 12 lbs. hay, 8 lbs. straw ; but it was commanded by a past master in the art of stable management.

They say there is a key to every horse's mouth, and I believe the same to be true of nearly every

horse's stomach ; and a really careful groom will find it. A bad doer is useless in a hunting stable, particularly in a poor man's ; but I believe there are very few horses which cannot be got to take sufficient food by a really competent man. Most horses which are shy feeders at other times, will feed well at night. Any horse, therefore, which you consider is not doing himself and you credit, should be given a good double feed the last thing at night, and there will very seldom be anything left in the manger the next morning. I always have a good feed given at this time to every horse which has been out that day, to make up for the feeds he has missed when at work.

A horse has a relatively small stomach, which, I believe, scientific people will tell you is emptied in four hours. He should be fed, therefore, in small quantities at a time, and frequently. Three pounds of corn at a feed is sufficient. This is a little more than an ordinary quartern measure, which contains about $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. The great thing is to insist on the horses being fed at regular intervals ; as far, that is to say, as their work as hunters will allow.

I have my horses fed four, and, if necessary, five times during the day—after the morning and mid-day stable hours ; again at three ; after evening stables, and the last thing at night. I am a

great believer in this last feed, and a good groom, who takes an interest in his horses, will believe in it too, though a lazy or beery stableman will fight against it. I remember, once, when my stud groom was laid up for some time, having a 'locum tenens' lent me by a friend. The man was, in many ways, a capable stable man, but rather too fond of his nightly glass, and looked on visiting stables at 9 P.M. as a 'fad' not to be encouraged. When I engaged him I told him I always wished to see him at that hour, and, about the third night he was with me, I went out. He assured me that the horses had all been fed, though every manger was clean and each horse told me plainly enough that *he* hadn't had his accustomed feed. I waited patiently whilst each horse was fed '*again*,' and during the remainder of his tenure of office I believe the horses were fed as I wished, though doubtless, in the village bar parlour, I was stigmatised as 'no gentleman.' I always have made a practice of going round stables occasionally at night, not only to see that my rules for feeding are carried out, but also to be sure that the boxes are properly ventilated.

As to the amount of food a hunter in work will consume per diem, you may calculate it
Amount of food roughly at: Oats, 14 lbs., hay, 10 lbs., with 10 lbs. straw for litter.

Years ago, a stud groom, writing to the 'Field,' said :

' My experience, which extends over thirty years in the hunting stable, has proved to me that the amount of forage consumed per horse in a stable, where the gentleman hunts with hounds and not after them, would be about : 14 lbs. oats, and 2 lbs. beans, per day. With this amount few horses would eat more than one truss of hay (56 lbs.) per week ; this, with two trusses straw (72 lbs.), 7 lbs. bran, and one pint linseed, should suffice.'

This calculation agrees with my own, except in the matter of hay. One truss per week means 8 lbs. per day, which I think is rather too little for a full-sized hunter.

When a horse is in hard work I always allow his appetite to be the measure of his corn ; but I have never had a horse who would go on eating more than the amount stated above for any length of time. Beans or peas (personally, I prefer the latter) are an important article of diet in a hunting stable, and some horses never do really well without them ; but they should be used with great caution, especially with young horses. They are, as you know, heating, and apt to cause filled legs and skin eruptions if given too freely.

They should never be given unless a horse is doing hard work, and even then two or three

pounds a day is quite enough. They must of course be split.

Chaff should be given in every feed of corn. It makes a horse masticate, and therefore digest, his corn better than he would do if fed with oats alone. Clover and rye grass hay, commonly called 'seeds,' make, I think, the best chaff. An amount equal in bulk to the oats is sufficient to give at each feed. Some horses, like some men, will eat and can digest almost anything, and look well on it. It is the dainty feeders which require the stud groom's special and constant care. The great thing is never to sicken them by giving them more at each feed than they will finish up. Food left for any length of time under a horse's nose puts him off altogether. A very little observation should tell a good man exactly what a horse's feeding capacity is, and he should put before him no more than he can manage comfortably. He should go round an hour after every feed, and remove any corn left in the mangers. As I mentioned above, there is but little danger of sickening a horse by giving him too much at the late feed. I have had dainty horses which would always get through a double feed between then and the next morning. Why this is I cannot say. Probably because in the night they are quiet, and there is nothing to excite a nervous horse. Some horses will feed better with carrots

chopped up fine ; others won't eat their corn well unless a few beans are added. Sugar will tempt some, and I once had a horse, a bad doer, which my soldier groom kept in good condition by mixing flour with his corn.

Care must be taken by the stud groom in issuing the hay ; great waste is often caused in this by
Hay careless stablemen. More is shoved into the racks than the animal can possibly get through ; he pulls it down, tramples on it, and a great deal of good hay goes out with the litter. In a large stable this makes a very considerable difference. I remember once my stud groom going suddenly ill and continuing so for some months. I put another man temporarily in his place, and, as he was 'no scholar,' did not insist on his rendering any account of forage expended. The result was that, in about three months, more than three tons of hay over and above the proper amount disappeared, which I found out later, on making inquiries, was due to careless feeding. I may mention that there were twenty-four animals in the stable at the time, belonging to myself and a friend.

Rock salt should always be in the horse's
Salt manger, and common table salt should be mixed with all mashes and cooked food.

You will see by my Stable Rules, given in Chapter IV., that I advocate a mash being given twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday nights. A hunter in hard work is being fed on unnaturally stimulating and heating food, and I think a bi-weekly laxative is the best thing to counteract the evils of this, and to obviate recourse to physic, which is to be avoided if possible.

I am sure the less drugs either we or our horses take the better. Their use was at one time, like bleeding and other relics of barbarism, much too frequent; and even now most grooms have a sneaking liking for them, especially if expensive. I always discourage them in my own stable, and would never permit their being given without my knowledge.

A mild dose of aloes is necessary when a horse meets with some injury which requires that his system should be suddenly cooled, and I think it is desirable when an animal is quickly changed from a very high to a very low diet, and *vice versa*; but the constant periodical giving of balls is, I am sure, an abomination, and will ruin any horse's digestion in time.

I need hardly say that the Wednesday mash is not given to a horse if he is for hunting on Thursday.

Water, as I have recommended in Chapter III., should be always before the horses, and, if this is done, I do not think there is ever any
Water danger of an animal drinking too much, or at the wrong time.

Many stablemen have a holy horror of water as a beverage either for themselves or the animal they look after, and, as regards the latter, at least, they carry their aversion to ridiculous lengths, often stinting horses without cause. I have marched and manœuvred a good deal in England, where one sees thousands of horses, when hot from a field day or long and dusty march, allowed to drink their fill, and I have never known a case of a horse suffering from this practice. It is better, of course, to chill water before it is given to horses which have lately been heated; but water left standing in buckets in the stable will not usually be too cold for any horse to drink. The quality of water also has a considerable effect on the condition of horses, as one often notices in moving from one station to another, where all the other conditions are exactly the same. Horses do much better on soft water than on hard, which has the effect of making them look unthrifty. I have dwelt on this question of watering because it has a very important bearing on feeding and the condition of the horses generally. You notice this particularly in the army. If two

units are 'lying alongside' of one another in camp, and you notice the officers of the one taking the keenest interest in the watering, that unit will look the best. It is a duty which does require a great deal of personal supervision on the part of the orderly officer, as many men will not hesitate to hurry their horses over their drink in order the sooner to commence their own. A horse does not like to drink in a hurry, and enjoys the luxury of having two or three goes at his bucket or trough. If you have to water your horses in this way, impress this fact on your groom.

Forty or fifty years ago civilian grooms had quaint and barbarous customs of stinting horses of food and water for about twelve hours before they went on to the meet. This, I suppose, combined with mistaken notions as to conditioning, caused the number of deaths we read of during any exceptional long hunt, and which we see illustrated by Alken and others; for instance, in the series on the great Billesdon Coplow run. And yet hounds in those days probably did not go nearly as fast as their descendants.

I need not impress on you to be most careful as to the quality of your forage. In the numerous works to which I have before referred you will learn all that printed matter can teach you as to the quality of oats, hay, &c.; but

Forage

you will learn far more by studying them yourself, with an expert, if possible, to show you good stuff from bad. The British officer of the present day goes through a course in this subject, and a very useful course it is. If possible, buy your forage direct from a farmer in the country you hunt in. Nothing brings the benefit of hunting more forcibly home to a farmer than getting from you, a hunting-man, more than a dealer will give him for his oats and straw, and considerably more than the consumer's price for his hay. Of course you should let him have the middle-man's profit; that is, give him the dealer's price for his stuff. You owe that to him for riding over his land. If you cannot find a farmer to supply you, go to a good local dealer; but it is as well to watch the market prices for the various things, especially the odds and ends, like linseed, oatmeal, &c.

Do not buy foreign stuff. It is rarely so good as the home-grown produce, and, whatever your views may be as to free trade, every
Oats
hunting-man should do all in his power to support British agriculture, even if it cost him a trifle more, as he owes his sport entirely to the British agriculturist. Your oats should be old, that is, thrashed a year before the current season. They should be big, bold, hard and clean. General Fitz-Wygram maintains that an equal weight of

small oats, which are much cheaper relatively, is as good as the same weight of larger, better oats. I venture to disagree, and believe there is more nutritive value in good big oats, weight for weight; and trainers would seem to think so too, as they will have nothing but this class of corn.

If you have storage room, it is as well to buy your oats in the spring. It is rather cheaper, as a rule, to do so then, and you insure having nothing but old oats for the ensuing season. When bought in the autumn they are occasionally mixed with new.

I must warn you, however, against storing too many, unless you have very good, well ventilated store-houses, entirely disconnected with your stable; and, in any case, the oats want thoroughly turning over once a month, which it is impossible to do properly if they lie too deep on the floor. If these conditions are not fulfilled the oats will heat and be attacked by weevil (a small insect), and you will have a tremendous difficulty ever to get them clean again.

There is one difficulty, in my part of the world at least, about buying your oats direct from the farmer, namely, that many of them thrash out their oats in the autumn, needing the money to pay the rent, and it is not often convenient for a gentleman to store them through the winter. Well-to-do men

put off their thrashing till February, which is convenient enough.

As a rule, horses digest their oats better when they are crushed. Greedy feeders often bolt their uncrushed oats whole, as you can see by looking at their droppings. If an animal is doing well I do not know that it is worth the labour to crush ; but certainly do so if you are not satisfied with the way a particular horse is looking.

I think much greater attention should be paid than is generally done to the cleanliness of oats.

I have found it a good plan to pass all mine through an inexpensive, easily erected, oat cleaning machine, made by Mr. Lister, of Dursley ; and the amount of dirt extracted from even the cleanest looking oats is surprising.

Hunters in hard work do not require a great deal of hay, but what they do have should be of

the very best. A certain proportion of seeds, namely, artificially sown hay, generally rye grass and clover, is a good thing, and is useful for cutting up as chaff. Your horses should not touch a blade of the previous year's crop until the end of the season. I do not see any advantage in giving them hay older than that of the summer before this, as, after that time, the grasses are apt to lose their nature. Fitz-Wygram will tell you all that books can of the judging of

hay. You should learn the different grasses, which are a guide to the quality of land on which the hay has been grown. You can get very good sample cases from Sutton, of Reading, which will enable you to identify them all, and if you care to take the trouble, you can collect them for yourself in a book, sorting them, according to Fitz-Wygram, into 'Very good,' 'Good,' 'Bad,' &c. If you are buying, as you should do, straight from a farmer, I think you will find it the best plan not to buy the whole stack, but to pay a higher price for him to cut and deliver none but the best. The outsides will be no use to you unless you are farming, and it is sometimes rather difficult to judge of a stack until it has been cut up and trussed. If you can, find out when the hay was cut, and whether it was well made. Some farmers put off cutting their hay until far too late; this you should be able to judge by the hay having seeded, and the absence of flowers in it. Others, through want of sufficient labour, leave it lying about a great deal too long, and do not turn it sufficiently. Under these conditions, however good the land and the grasses composing the hay, it will never be good hunter hay. Besides looking and smelling right, first class hay should have a feel about it. When gripped by the hands the stalks of the grasses should feel as if they *were* stalks, and not soft and flabby rubbish.

It is difficult to quite explain what I mean ; but if you get a sample of really good old hunter hay, and compare it with the fodder most farmers give their cows, I think you will understand. The latter is probably quite wholesome, but for animals doing hard work absolutely innutritious.

Straw is an important and expensive item in the forage account, especially in a grass country.

When I first came into Leicestershire I
Straw used to get a farmer to supply me with straw at 35s. a ton, he taking back all the manure. Moving to the neighbourhood of a town I had to pay fifty to sixty shillings, and had considerable difficulty in getting the dung-pit cleared, until I started farming, and wanted the manure myself, when I found there was a certain amount of competition for it.

Two trusses of 36 lbs. a week ought to do two boxes comfortably, if well looked after ; but unless your head groom is careful about having the litter out in the morning, and well turned over once or twice, this amount will not suffice. All dung and thoroughly soiled portions should be removed to the dung-pit ; but here again, unless care is taken, much waste will ensue. Some men will cast out a great deal of perfectly good litter, as you will see by looking at many manure pits.

Wheat straw is the best, and should be bright

and clean, and not brittle. Oat straw horses are apt to eat, and barley straw is quite inadmissible as it irritates their skin.

You will see in my Stable Rules I have given instructions on the making of mashes. This is not so unnecessary as it may seem. It is surprising how many men, who consider themselves stablemen, are ignorant on this very simple equine cookery; and badly cooked food is as indigestible to the horse as it is to his master. In a battery which I joined once, I found the weekly Saturday mash was made by putting the bran rations in the dung-barrow, pouring on it lukewarm water, and ladling this savoury compound into the manger with a stable shovel. Needless to say, half of it was left by the indignant troop of horse, and went out to the manure-pit on Sunday morning.

Nothing is more unappetising than stale, sour bran, and buckets and mangers in which it has been should be well scrubbed out with salt.

Never give spices or condiments to your hunters. They may be useful for getting horses up for show or sale. I have no experience; but, on this point, I am sure all highly-spiced foods are injurious to a horse's digestion, and he may get into such a condition that he cannot do without them. If you and your groom cannot get a horse

to keep a fair amount of condition on old oats, beans or peas, bran and linseed, there must be something radically wrong with the animal, and he has no business in a hunting stable.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMERING AND CONDITIONING OF HUNTERS

THE hunting season being over, the next question is, how best to keep our horses during the summer months. I am assuming that you are not sending your stud up to auction, but mean to keep those which suit you for the next winter campaign. It will well pay you to do so, because, if some unforeseen reason should prevent your hunting next November, you will find a ready sale for good horses sold for a genuine reason ; whereas, in April, they are looking at their worst, and, unless very well known, will hardly fetch anything approaching their value. Any horse which does not really suit you, and which gives you no pleasure to ride, is best out of your stable, at whatever cost ; but, unless dire necessity compels you, do not part with any horse which you really like. I am firmly convinced that, taking an average of several seasons, and supposing you have any place in which to summer your horses, selling them at even apparently remunerative prices will not pay you. Some men do so

because they must ; others, idle men, because they like the occupation, during the summer months, of getting a new lot together ; others — with Irish blood in their veins — because they love coping ; but all these reasons, good enough in their way, have nothing to do with sport. And from the latter point of view, that is, looking at your horse as a means of seeing the greatest amount of hunting, I confidently assert that it is a mistake to part with a hunter which suits you. Unless you are a quite exceptional horseman you won't go half as well on a horse which you do not know, and he will certainly not be fit to carry you through a real good thing until he has eaten your corn for a year. How often do you not hear it said of ' So-and-so,' who has in years gone by made a record sale, that he has never gone to hounds as he used to on the old lot.

Assuming, then, that you are going to keep your stud, there are three courses open to you : first, to turn them out to grass ; secondly, to summer them in loose boxes or a yard ; and, thirdly, to keep them up in gentle exercise.

I will endeavour to put before you the advantages and disadvantages of these three courses, all of which I have tried.

The first, turning out to grass, has only one advantage, and that a doubtful one ; namely, cheap-

ness. I have referred you to 'Nimrod's' 'Condition of Hunters' before, and he has really said all that there is to be said on this subject, much better than I can ; but I will give you my own experience of the disadvantages of the method. When I adopted it my percentage of lameness during the hunting season was very much greater than it has been since. I also had more than one accident from kicks and fences, and one old horse actually split his pastern galloping on the hard ground. In addition to this, your horses undoubtedly lose condition, which it will take months to regain. Hence I came to the conclusion that the system had not even the merit of economy.

The second method, that of summering in loose boxes or a strawyard, is a compromise between the first and third. It offers less risk than turning out to grass, and is almost as cheap, the animals requiring no grooming ; but they get no exercise worth the name, and consequently lose much of their winter condition. The third system is without any doubt the best, and will pay you best in the long run. People sometimes urge that a horse which has been hardly worked all the hunting season requires a rest during the summer. A rest from *work*, and its necessary accompaniment, high feeding, is certainly desirable ; but exercise is not work, nor is six months' idleness proper rest.

I advise the following treatment :

As soon as the hunting season is over, the owner or stud groom should carefully examine each horse, and should decide on what should be the immediate treatment required in his case. Some will want blistering or firing. With them an enforced rest, more or less prolonged, will be a necessity—good for the injured limb, but bad for the horses' condition. It is a choice of two evils. All the horses can be gradually cooled down, and placed on a lower scale of diet. Any that are going to be operated on should have a dose of physic—four drams aloes is plenty ; and the others will be none the worse for a couple of pints of linseed oil, given on successive nights, a pint at a time. Some grooms always like to give every horse a dose of physic at this time. There is no sense in it, unless a horse needs sudden cooling down, or is looking stale or bad. Then it is a good thing, often helping him to start assimilating his food, and to get benefit from a tonic, if you think fit to give him one. Anyhow, a fortnight's rest, on quite laxative food, will not hurt all your horses. Put them on this regime gradually, and let your man spend the fortnight's time marking any damages to horses, clothing, saddlery, &c. This will bring him to about the last week in April. If you have a handy paddock, and it is not a very cold spring, those horses which have been blistered

might be turned out. As a rule, the blister will keep them quiet. If it does not, and they are inclined to gallop about, they must of course be taken in again; but otherwise the amount of exercise they get nibbling at the spring grass will do them good. The sound horses can now begin walking exercise, starting with half an hour a day, gradually increased to twice that amount. Unless a horse has a tendency to flat feet, or very thin soles, he will do better now if shod with tips, which will bring his frogs on the ground, and check any tendency to coarse or contracted feet.

With regard to this point, if you do elect to summer your horses at grass, be careful to shoe them with tips in front (they will require no hind shoes), and remember that their feet must be seen to at least once a month. This is the chief expense connected with summering them in the stable. If you have a shady paddock near your stable, it is a luxury for a horse to be allowed a run in it in the cool of the morning and evening; and if the weather is very hot he can be left out all night. If they are quiet, two or three horses can be turned out in this way together, but your groom must make certain that they do not gallop about, or kick at one another. It is sheer cruelty to turn a short-tailed horse out in the middle of a hot summer's day when the flies are at him.

If you decide to summer entirely in the stable, give your animal a liberal allowance of green food—fresh-cut grass, lucerne, or vetches, according to the locality and season of the year. This will be a healthy change from the stimulating winter diet, and will do away with the need of the dose of physic which most grooms think necessary at the beginning of the ‘conditioning.’ During these months horses should do well (in addition to the green fodder) with one-and-a-half bushel of oats, and one-and-a-half hundredweight of hay per horse. No hard and fast rule can of course be laid down, but the average requirements ought not to exceed these amounts.

This most important preparation for the winter
Condition-
ing should begin not later than the middle
of August. My own orders are as follows :

August 15.—Give walking exercise one-and-a-half hour, increasing the daily ration of corn to three feeds (10 lbs.), and cutting half of the hay allowed (say 12 lbs.) into chaff.

September 1.—The exercise can be increased to two-and-a-half hours, with a daily slow trot of two to three miles on the softest ground that can be found, and uphill if possible ; nothing is better for developing a hunter’s muscle than slow trotting uphill. The corn should, at the same time, be

increased by another feed, a handful of peas or beans being given to any old horse which may need it.

September 15 to November 1.—By this time the daily exercise should be increased to three hours, and the horses fed as during the hunting season. Any particularly gross horse should be sweated by giving him a long trot in clothing. This is preferable to galloping, which knocks the legs about. I should strongly advise strict order being given that no horse is, under any circumstance, to be galloped, unless by the owner or in his presence. If the horses have been regularly getting the amount of slow work laid down above, a very few gallops will be sufficient to clear their pipes.

To do this, if possible, ride your horse a few days cub-hunting. Unless the ground is exceptionally hard, which it sometimes is
 Cub-hunting (especially in the Midlands) in October, there is no better preparation for the hunting season. In many books you will be recommended to increase the exercise to four hours a day. I tried it and found my animal stale at the beginning of November. Three hours a day is enough to get any horse fit to hunt; more than this bores them and your men, and, in my opinion, does no good. Exercising along a road is uninteresting work, and after a time becomes pure drudgery, which is

another reason why an occasional morning's cubbing is so much to be recommended.

Another point to be considered in the conditioning season is the question of clipping. Many advise this

not being done until the whole of the coat
Clippinghas grown, and is what they call 'set.' I

have found from experience that it is better to take the coat off directly enough has grown to be worth clipping, and to continue doing so as long as it grows. This does no harm to the horse's appearance, and he feels the loss much less than when a large quantity of winter coat is removed at one clipping. I know that since I discontinued doing this I have had hardly any cough in the stable during the autumn, which was not the case previously. A horse, too, does his work better, more comfortably, and with less risks of chill, when the coat is frequently removed, and of course it makes far less labour for your stablemen. If the stud is a large one, say more than six horses, one of the numerous clipping machines on the market is a most desirable adjunct to the stable, saving your head groom (who ought to do all clipping and trimming) a great deal of time as well as fatigue. The desirability of clipping the saddle mark is a matter of opinion. Personally, I am in favour of leaving the hair on under the saddle, as a preventative to sore back; but, if this is done, the

greatest possible care must be taken to thoroughly dry this part after the removal of the saddle. The time when the want of this protection will be most felt is in the end of the season, just before the horse begins to shed his winter coat. The hair is then apt to rub off very easily with the least chafing, and nothing will be left between the bare skin and the saddle.

The clipping of the legs is another vexed question, and to a certain extent a matter of fashion. Horses look smarter with the legs clipped, and are, of course, easier groomed when wet and dirty; but my opinion is that the hair on the legs acts as a certain defence against blows and thorns, which are a frequent cause of lameness in the hunting season. Some urge that, with the hair on, thorns are much more difficult to find; but I do not think a good groom will ever have much difficulty in discovering a thorn through the amount of hair grown by a well-bred hunter. For appearances' sake the legs can be singed, any long hair on the fetlock being removed by the hand. A little resin is all that is required for this, and an occasional trimming with the scissors.

Before leaving the subject of conditioning, I will say what little I have to say on the question of hunting-saddles. Before the season actually commences, your groom should see to the stuffing

of all his saddles, and make sure that they fit the horse for whom they are intended. The shape of some horses' backs alters considerably during the conditioning time, and if a saddle has not an equal bearing on the animal's back the first day's hunting will find it out. Nothing is more annoying than to have a sound horse placed 'hors de combat' from this cause. If you have a saddle room, the safest plan is to have a saddle fitted for each horse; but it is by no means necessary to do this. One saddle may very possibly fit two or three horses; only you must not expect that any saddle will fit any horse indiscriminately.

With side saddles, a separate saddle for each animal is more desirable, and it is as well to see that the horses which are to carry a lady are ridden during September and October at exercise in their saddles. A light boy should be put up in a lady's second horseman's pad. The bearing of a lady's saddle comes much further back than that of a man's, so that if a horse has only been ridden in the latter, he is almost certain to feel the first long day with a lady on his back. A useful form of saddle for indiscriminate use, though somewhat unsightly, is one called the Wykeham saddle, patented by a Winchester saddler, named Richards. It consists of a felt numnah, perforated in the centre, which fits loosely, though securely, on the

stripped tree of the saddle, on the same principle as the latest patent cavalry saddle. It is somewhat lighter than the ordinary saddle, is very easily brushed and cleaned, and there is no stuffing to shift or become caked. If the saddle is to be used two days running it is very desirable to have a spare numnah, so that the used one can be thoroughly dried and brushed before being put on again.

I have all my old saddles converted to this pattern (which can be done easily and inexpensively), and use them for putting on to any strange horse which has no saddle to fit it; and I should always take one of them abroad in preference to the ordinary saddle with the stuffed panels.

The best and coolest numnah for use with the ordinary saddle is a thin leather one, which should
 Numnah be kept soft by rubbing the rough side
 (not that which goes next to the horse)
 with an old tallow dip.

Whatever numnah you use, see that it is considerably larger than the saddle. Nothing is more sure to cause a sore back than pressure coming on the edge of the numnah.

Do not have your saddles made too small. The weight you save will be more than lost in the discomfort to yourself, readily communicated to your horse, besides which, in a small saddle, you

will probably sit over the cantle, bringing pressure on the tenderest portion of the back, the ridge of the spine, and almost certainly causing a gall.

To those wishing to go further into this interesting subject I would recommend a little work by Veterinary-Major Smith, A.V. Dept.

For appearance and use in the hunting-field I would recommend a plain flap saddle; but be careful to have the flap well cut forward. Saddles should, I need hardly say, be kept spotlessly clean, and should be thoroughly aired before the saddle-room fire after use. As regards the leather work, you ought to be able to ride in white breeches without getting any stain from your saddle, and you should insist on your groom keeping them up to this mark. Stablemen are fond of putting saddles down on the ground, which should be checked, as it wears out the leather round the edges, especially at the pommel. To prevent this it is good to have a folding saddle bracket in every box (a single hinged bar is enough), on which the saddle can be put directly it is taken off the back, and for drying the panels a saddle airer¹ should be employed.

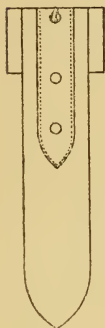
No one ought to ride to hounds without some device to prevent being hung up by the stirrup and

¹ This common article of stable furniture can be got at the stores, or from any saddler.

dragged after a fall. You will probably never realise the full necessity of this until you have found yourself tied by your stirrup leather to a frightened horse, who is kicking at your head in his struggles to dissolve the unwelcome partnership. There are many safety bars, and, as far as my experience goes, they all suffer from the defect of occasionally flying off before there is any necessity for their doing so. Champion and Tritton's patent hooks are free from this defect, and I have never found them fail me in time of need. They are very simple and inexpensive, hooking on to the ordinary saddle bar. When using them the stirrup leather must be put on with the tongue of the buckle inwards, towards the saddle. This means taking the whole strap off to shorten your stirrup when mounted, a quite simple operation. The 'crab' of these hooks is that they cause great strain on the stirrup leather at the tongue, making it wear out somewhat quickly, and they are also rather apt to wrench the saddle bar outwards, if the rider turns suddenly in the saddle.

Impress on your groom to be most particular about your leathers, and never send you out with a doubtful one. A broken leather may lose you the run of the season, even if it does not mean a fall. Leathers which are at all worn had better be kept

for the exercising saddles. A very good sportsman, a heavy weight, well known in the hunting and polo world, tells me he avoids a broken stirrup leather by having a thin strip of leather sewn on to the stirrup leather in the middle, over the holes, as shown in the accompanying sketch.



Stirrups

Many practical men have a keeper on their stirrup leathers to prevent the risk of a spur getting caught in them.

Have your stirrups wide enough to let your feet go easily in and out, but of course not large enough to allow any risk of your foot

going right through. Nothing looks smarter than white web girths, and probably they are as comfortable for the horse as any. They have, however, to be cleaned with pipe-clay, which soon rots them, so that they are not as workman-like nor so economical as split leather girths, which answer every purpose, and should never hurt a horse if kept clean and soft by occasional dubbing on the inside.

Girths

I am not a believer in a lot of fancy bits. Bit collecting has a fascination for most of us at some period of our hunting career, but like most collections it is somewhat expensive, as I don't think we often use our fancy varieties. The

Bridle

truth is that a horse which will not go in a double bridle, light or heavy according to the amount of spoiling his mouth has undergone, will not go comfortably *for long* in any bridle the forimer can fashion, and is, therefore, no horse for a hunting stable. Many hard pullers will go all right for a few days in some new bit, and you fancy that you have at last defeated them ; but it is generally only for a time. As soon as they have become accustomed to the new form of restraint they find out how to defeat it and you, and pull as hard as ever.

A form of bit which I have a great fancy for is the 'Ben Morgan,' recommended by Major Fisher in his excellent work 'Stable and Saddle Room.' You can hardly call this a fancy bit. It is merely a half moon turned the reverse way, and I have found several horses and ponies which did not go quite kindly in an ordinary bit and bridoon go nicely in this, and there is nothing to irritate or upset the lightest-mouthed horse.

My advice is, do not ride a horse in a flying country in a snaffle bridle. You will have falls if you do. A number of horses come over from Ireland which have never had anything but a snaffle in their mouths before, but to my mind they are not perfect hunters till they have been taught not to fight against a light double bridle, and they can all be taught this by a man with good hands

and a little patience. I can quite understand that in Ireland, or any bank country, a horse may go better and more safely in a plain snaffle bridle ; but in this form of bit there can be no question of collecting a horse at his fences, or of putting him on his haunches to enable him to take off right. You must trust your mount to do all this for himself, and I maintain that you cannot go on doing this for long with impunity over the high timber and stiff laid fences you meet in the Midlands. A horse comes at a bank in the condition I can only describe as being ‘ all abroad.’ He is not collected, and you feel that he does not quite know when to take off. I defy you on a snaffle bridle to do anything to help him, and you have just to let him alone. If he is a clever horse he will put in a short one on the bank—he may blunder a bit, but he will get over without a fall ; whereas the slightest mistake in judging distance over stiff timber or a blackthorn fence is an almost certain fall. Of course I am not advocating messing a horse’s mouth about, or suggesting that you can assist him to jump by means of his mouth ; but you can, by pulling him together twenty or thirty yards from his fence, put him in the most favourable position to take off right, and in jumping fences it is taking off wrong which brings a horse to grief nine times out of ten.

If a horse is in the least inclined to carry his head higher than he should, put a running martingale on him. If put on him properly there is no possible objection to it, and there is the very gravest objection to a horse going at a fence with his head

in the air. It should be fitted so that the
 Martingale ring comes well up to the throttle when the horse carries his head in the natural position.

These rings should be made square to avoid any danger of their slipping over the rings on the bit. People are very dogmatic about the martingale being attached to the bit reins. This is undoubtedly best, if the horse will allow it to be done ; but some animals will not go kindly with any restraint on the rein of the bit, and will go on fighting until it is removed. It is much better, in a case of this kind, to place the martingale on the bridoon reins.



I do not like riding a horse over a country with a standing martingale on. I have seen it done more than once, some horsemen maintaining that it only acts when a horse's head gets into an improper position, and that therefore there can be no danger in it ; but I think there are times when a horse has made a mistake, and is struggling to recover himself, when he wants his head perfectly free, which you can give him with a running, but not with a standing, martingale.

I need not tell you not to have your curb chain too tight. When the cheek of the bit is in line with the cheek piece of the bridle, there should be plenty of room for your finger between the curb chain and the jaw.

Curb chain It is advisable to have a leather chain guard to prevent the risk of the curb chain galling, and a really tight-mouthed horse will go best in a leather curb.

If an animal requires a strong bit, get this strength by a long cheek and not by a high port. The latter may play the mischief with a horse's mouth before you know what you have done, and when once a horse's mouth gets really sore inside it is a long and tedious business getting it right again, and sometimes requires a veterinary operation. Besides, with a well-bred spirited horse, the more you hurt him the more he will fight you, and one day's pain from a severe bit may convert what was only a keen eager horse into a determined puller.

CHAPTER VII

STABLE SERVANTS

It is hardly necessary to impress on you that the well-being of your stud depends on your having a good head groom. The larger your stables the more capable must this man be ; but even if it consists of only two horses, the man in charge must be a really good stableman, by which I mean, he must have a thorough knowledge of horses, be fond of them, and competent to dress and turn them out in a workmanlike way. The need for sobriety and trustworthiness goes without saying, and by trustworthiness I infer that he can be depended on to carry out any orders he may receive from you.

It is all very well to talk about being one's own head groom. I have done it, as I mentioned at the commencement of this work, but the results were hardly satisfactory. No gentleman with any other occupation in life can give the time and attention which are absolutely necessary if a stable is to be carried on properly. Good strappers, men

who are only required to use their hands, are comparatively easy to get; but a good head man is not to be picked up at short notice.

I should advise your trying to get, if possible, a man who is thoroughly recommended from a good hunting stable—either a helper who wants to rise in life, or, better still, a second horseman who is getting too heavy for that duty. The latter will probably be a fairly good horseman, which is a great advantage. If there are to be men under him he should not be less than thirty years old. You will not get (in the Midlands, at least) a man fit to be left in charge of hunters for less than 25*s.* a week, a strapper's wages being from 18*s.* to 20*s.* Of course the larger the stud the higher should be the remuneration. In a big hunting stable, apart from the manual labour, there is a great deal of head work demanded of the stud groom, if the wheels of the establishment are to run smoothly, and a man with a head, who is also reliable, will always command good wages.

Having secured a man whom you believe you can trust, you must leave the discipline of the stable entirely in his hands. Give him your orders plainly and distinctly, and let there be no misunderstanding about your wishes. Then leave him a certain latitude in carrying them out. If he is a capable man with tact, he will not, as a rule, have

much trouble with his helpers, especially if he engages his own, with the understanding that he can get rid of them if they give trouble. If trouble of this kind occurs frequently, you should look into things, and judge whether it is the fault of the groom or his helpers, and act accordingly; but whilst he is in charge of the stables his authority must be fully supported by you. Be careful, when you notice anything you do not approve of, not to speak to him about it in the presence of the men under him. It is very galling to a good man, and weakens his authority. I think it is a good plan to get out of the habit (to which some of us are prone, when young) of constant fault finding, when the stable work is going on. Of course, check at once anything glaringly wrong which you see, but the small things which you may remark, it is better, I think, to defer noticing until the work is over, when you can do so quietly and temperately. When your groom comes in for orders in the evening (which a hunting groom should always do) tell him of any little thing you observed, which you wish to be altered. If he is a good man you ought not to have to refer to this particular thing again. If you do have to, it becomes a question whether the man is worth keeping as a head groom.

Never swear at a servant. It is bad form, and is like striking a man who cannot strike back

at you. A really first-class man won't stand it, as a rule, however good your place, and a second-class man will pass it on with interest to those below him, which means a very uncomfortable establishment.

Check all bad language in the stable-yard, more particularly (as is so often the case in a hunting-box) if the yard is quite close to the house. Men are very apt to drop into foul language, which savours of a second-rate livery stable.

As regards the number of men you require, you can take it that one man for every two horses in the stud ought to carry on all right. For instance, for a stud of six horses, a good working head man, a second horseman, and one helper, ought to do ; but if you are hunting often, which means the second horseman away most of the day, they will have their work cut out to turn horses and saddlery out really well. Above this number, every extra helper to each two horses will be a great assistance. I mean that five men can carry on a stable of ten horses better than three can do one of six. With more than six horses your head man will have enough to do, clipping, trimming up, and generally superintending the stable, forage, &c., and must leave the manual labour of strapping to his helpers ; but a good man will always take his coat off, and diet a horse, if necessary. During the actual hunt-

ing season, when exercise is short, a helper who has nothing else to do, ought to be able to dress three horses, but to do this properly, he must be a really good workman. Try, if possible, to get men who have been brought up from boyhood in the stable, children of respectable stable servants preferred. I have found that my best men belonged to this class. The work seems to come easier to them, and they notice things about their horses as if by instinct, which never seems to strike a man who took to stable work late in life. A great many stable ills are caused through the man in charge not noticing the beginning of them. In the hunting stable, if anywhere, 'a stitch in time saves nine.'

Whatever else you leave to your head groom, I should advise your ordering your forage yourself. I am not going into that subject of bribery by tradesmen, which is too prevalent to be stopped until education introduces a higher standard of morality. Among stablemen I firmly believe that this will come one of these days. At the beginning of the century the financial morals of our own class were much lower than they are now, and our grandfathers winked at iniquities from which we should shrink with horror. The morals of most individuals are those of the class to which they belong, and, as a class, servants do not yet realise that in taking 'tips' from tradesmen they are being

bribed to betray their masters' interests, and are doing a mean thing, which no self-respecting man could do if he thought the matter over. However, there is no good blinding oneself to the fact that the iniquity does exist, and the only thing for you as an employer to do is, by personal supervision, to insure that money spent by tradesmen in that way is money wasted; and, secondly, to convince your groom that it will pay him better to really look to your interests than to get dishonest and uncertain gain from tradesmen.

If you intend having out two horses a day you must get a good second horseman. He must, of course, be a light weight, but to save a stone or two there is no advantage in having a lad. Unless he is a quite exceptional specimen of the genus boy, he may be up to all sorts of games with your best horse, and if your animals are up to weights, a small lad will not be able to ride them when they are fresh. You want a good horseman, and, above all things, a quiet rider, with good hands. However good in other respects, I would not keep a bad-tempered man as second horseman. He will probably get annoyed with your favourite horse when you are not looking, job him in the mouth, and beat him over the head, spoiling your horse's temper and your comfort for the day, if not for longer. A man with the least tendency

to intemperance is, of course, out of the question in this capacity. He will be stopping to refresh on the road home, and then bring your horse on the rest of the way at too fast a pace. You should give him strict injunctions never to exceed the hunt servants' jog of six miles an hour, either going to covert or returning. The stud groom should judge of this last point by the state of the horse on his return.

Knowledge of the country will come to any intelligent man after a season or two. Until he has attained this you should insist on his sticking to the hunt second horsemen; and it would be no bad thing, in the interests either of sport or of the farmers, if this was made a universal rule.

I should regard with grave suspicion any second horseman who showed any fondness for jumping. It is never necessary, much less desirable, for him to indulge in this luxury, and he should be given the clearest order to confine himself to the *bridle* roads with which all the hunting counties I know of are so well provided.

I give below the very sensible direction sent round by Mr. Fernie on this subject:

RULES FOR SECOND HORSEMEN

1. As far as possible to keep to Roads and Bridle-paths.

2. On no account to jump or break down Fences.
3. To shut all Gates, especially leading on to a Road.
4. As far as possible to keep in a body with the Hunt Second Horsemen.
5. Not to let Stock out of the Fields they are in, and especially not on to a Road, and to endeavour to put back into their own Fields any found to have got out.
6. Not to take Horses out at any time schooling over Fences, without permission from the Occupier of the Land.

With regard to something I said before, as to making a stud groom of someone else's second horseman, you must bear in mind that it by no means follows that a good second horseman will make a good head man, any more than a good whipper-in will necessarily be a good huntsman. All the second horseman has to do is to ride your horse nicely and quietly, to turn himself out smartly, and learn to keep his eyes open to find you at the critical moment. In many ways he has the pleasantest and easiest time of anyone in the stable. He will find it very different when he blossoms into a head groom, and will be called upon to exercise much higher qualities, if his stable is to run smoothly, not the least being power

of command of men. He will at the same time find that he has a great deal more work, and ever so much more responsibility.

A second horseman's wages are about 25*s.* a week.

On the whole I have found stable servants a good and hard-working class. They have a good deal of monotonous work in all kinds of
Stablemen weather ministering to our chief pleasure, and are worthy of more consideration at our hands than they sometimes get. From stud groom to the youngest helper, all of them value a kindly word now and again, showing that the master realises and appreciates their labour. Few men who are worth much will go on giving you their best work if treated (as some men treat them) as automatons; and whether it is a question of commanding a regiment or controlling a stable, your endeavour should be, without going in for false sentiment, to appeal to the highest instincts in the men beneath you.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
<i>BADMINTON LIBRARY (THE)</i>	12	MENTAL, MORAL AND POLITICAL	
BIOGRAPHY, PERSONAL MEMOIRS,		PHILOSOPHY	16
ETC.	8	MISCELLANEOUS AND CRITICAL	
CHILDREN'S BOOKS	31	WORKS	37
CLASSICAL LITERATURE, TRANS-		MISCELLANEOUS THEOLOGICAL	
LATIONS, ETC.	21	WORKS	39
COOKERY, DOMESTIC MANAGEMENT,		POETRY AND THE DRAMA	23
ETC.	35	POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ECO-	
EVOLUTION, ANTHROPOLOGY, ETC.	21	NOMICS	20
FICTION, HUMOUR, ETC.	25	POPULAR SCIENCE	29
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